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Viewing cable 07MANAGUA627, CSE OFFICIAL CLAIMS ELECTORAL COUNCIL SERIOUS

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#07MANAGUA627.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07MANAGUA627	2007-03-08 23:29	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 000627

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2017

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SUBJECT: CSE OFFICIAL CLAIMS ELECTORAL COUNCIL SERIOUS
ABOUT REFORMS

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: Rodrigo Barreto, Chief of Staff of Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council (CSE), claims that most CSE magistrates are ready to implement desperately needed electoral reforms, but the Council requires donor assistance to move forward. The reforms would center around the issuance of new citizen ID/voter registration Sx-'pQsuccess of the cedulation effort prior to the 2008 municipal elections. End Summary.

12. (C) CSE Chief of Staff Rodrigo Barreto requested a meeting with poloff on March 7 to discuss the CSE's plans for electoral reforms and request the participation of the Ambassador in a meeting with CSE president Roberto Rivas. Barreto explained that Rivas has convinced most of the CSE magistrates to support the modernization of the cedulation process and has even, through Sandinista magistrate Castillo, obtained the benediction of President Ortega. (Comment: The CSE is technically an independent branch of government, but Rivas would never make any progress without the approval of the Sandinistas, who control most of the key positions in the CSE. End Comment.)

13. (C) According to Barreto, the power of Sandinista magistrate Emmet Lang, who many regarded as the real power in the CSE before the elections, has seriously deteriorated. Barreto commented that Lang's power plays, political ambition (he wants the CSE presidency) and staunch opposition to modernization has alienated the other magistrates. Lang considers that he "delivered the elections to Ortega" by manipulating the cedulation process, Barreto said. Consequently, Lang feels betrayed by Ortega's refusal to give government positions to his cronies, or even grant him an audience. Barreto claimed that Lang initiated the current wave of strikes by the CSE rank-and-file using his influence with the employees' unions to "show Ortega he still counts."

14. (C) Regarding the reforms, Barreto explained that Rivas plans to focus on the modernization of cedulation and the civil registry because the political parties, donors, and civil society essentially agree on what needs to be done in this area. The CSE would start with complete digitization of civil registry records (a birth certificate is required to obtain a cedula) and the professionalization of the registrars, who are currently municipal employees commonly influenced by the political affiliation of the mayor. New cedulas with a biometric identifier (thumb print) and other security features would concurrently be issued to form the basis of a new, "clean" padron. (Note: The current padron is inflated by about 30 percent with ineligible entries. End Note.) The whole process would be implemented under the guidance of an international organization such as IFES.

15. (C) Barreto admitted that the issuance of new cedulas would not be completed before the 2008 municipal elections, forcing the CSE to use an "auxiliary padron" for voters using the existing documents. He insisted, however, that the CSE is "serious" about distributing the new cedulas and is willing to work with civil society groups and international NGOs to accomplish this task. He also claimed that the CSE will implement safeguards to prevent citizens from voting twice with two different cedulas.

16. (C) Having obtained consensus from the magistrates and the President, Rivas is eager to meet with key donors to seek approval and funding. A loan of 6.2 million euros from Spain will only cover about half of the CSE's necessary expenses, Barreto noted. Local IFES director Rafael Lopez Pintor called after the meeting with Barreto to emphasize that Rivas' is committed, but the CSE must begin implementing the new systems by April to avoid jeopardizing the municipal elections. Lopez Pintor commented that the CSE would need an additional \$9 million to implement the planned reforms.

17. (C) Comment: The success of the CSE's reforms will depend on donor financing, which is in turn contingent upon transparency. Before the elections, Rivas walked a tightrope between donor and civil society demands for openness and the desire of certain elements of the PLC-FSLN political pact (including Lang) to cloud and stall the highly politicized cedulation and vote counting processes. Too often Rivas

allowed Lang to stonewall and shun observer groups -- as evidenced by the CSE's continued refusal to publicly release the final vote counts of individual tables -- hence Barreto's eagerness to explain Lang's eclipse by opposing forces. We and the other election donor countries plan to hear Rivas out and give him a chance to show that the CSE has taken a new tack and is ready to seriously approach electoral reform.

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